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Kohler briefed the Ambassadorial Group today on latest Thompson-Gromyko talk: Gromyko read Thompson 15 page declaration (being sent separate tel). Thompson expressed disappointment in declaration's contents. He reiterated our aim was to seek agreement and reduce tensions on basis peace treaty with unified Germany. As this not possible, we now seek agreement on access because this is potentially the most dangerous point of friction. On wider issues, frontiers etc., our position has not changed since Gromyko talked to the President i.e. we are prepared discuss these in due course but not until our Allies, as well as ourselves, know satisfactory agreement on Berlin possible. Thompson went on that presence Western troops in Berlin was no military threat, reminding recalling that Khrushchev had said that these troops had no military importance (Gromyko later admitted Khrushchev said this in Vienna but commented that it was because of this lack military significance that the Soviets were surprised we did not agree to the withdrawal of the troops or to addition of symbolic Soviet detachments). On IAA, Thompson questioned Soviet claim that this interferes with sovereignty as Soviets claim their proposal also provides guarantee free access to West Berlin. Thompson

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ALSO refused Gromyko's claim that West Berlin is part of the one sovereign territory at repetition already rejected for the presence of standing Western troops contingents in West Berlin. Thompson again pointed out that we have said would oppose conclusion GDR/USSR peace treaty with force but cannot accept Soviet claim that this treaty would liquidate Western rights in Berlin.

Gromyko replied that he understood the US position on inclusion frontiers and other issues in negotiations had not changed but that our ~~insistence~~ ^{insistence} on access agreement first shows we are trying to impose our plan on these talks. He said QTE we consider it necessary that all questions including peace treaty and West Berlin problem be discussed UNQTE.

Gromyko also referred to Thompson's rejection of deadline on troop presence in West Berlin, saying that Soviets consider indefinite retention Western or Soviet forces in West Berlin quite impossible as it does not meet interests of West or Soviets or of peace and security. Gromyko criticized Thompson statement on peace treaty and its effect on position of West in Berlin by saying that conclusion of such a treaty is not a simple formality but ~~is~~ QTE a major step from which would flow important measures UNQTE. Gromyko ~~concluded~~ concluded that Soviet Government wants a solution but QTE unfortunately so far position of US Government offers no hope for success UNQTE.

Thompson replied ^{although our views already well-known,} (a) further US comments would probably be forthcoming on Free City proposal; (b) on wider issues US and Allies concerned not only access agreement but whole settlement Berlin problem; ~~and~~ (c) on presence Western forces Berlin, West considers it has obligation to protect population of Berlin whether this has any legal force with Soviets or not, adding that Soviets claim they cannot consider all-Berlin

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solution because East Berlin has been incorporated in the GDR which GTE has no legal force with us UNQTE; (d) repeated that US attaches importance to maintenance troops in Berlin until resolution of German question.

Kohler commented that this round came sooner than we expected and that it was a stiff reply to our proposals. However, while US had no considered reaction as yet, it seemed we were coming close to complete impasse. In principle, we are inclined to have another round, possibly also in memorandum form. In particular seems necessary rebut on record Soviet contention that GTE peace treaty UNQTE is equivalent of GTE peace UNQTE and that resistance to force is aggression. Lord Hood seemed to agree with this and noted that Gromyko's position seemed GTE very familiar UNQTE. Schnippenkoetter commented that this early reply seemed to cut across speculation that the Soviets are anxious to draw out talks. Kohler agreed it was not consistent but that we were very much in the dark on Soviet motivations at this time. Alphant declined invitation to comment but did express interest in possible relationship of Powers/Abel exchange to Soviet posture on Berlin and Germany. Kohler said that these were not related and that exchange culminates considerable period of preparation although obviously there might be some relationship as far as timing goes. Both Germans and French seemed to feel that press likely attribute sensational significance to exchange.

For USRO: You may use Kohler briefing for NAC, PermReps plus one, without reference to prisoner exchange. Also authorized distribute text Gromyko declaration when received. Again, please enjoin secrecy.

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